

Social Work and the Environment:

Practice in the Climate Emergency

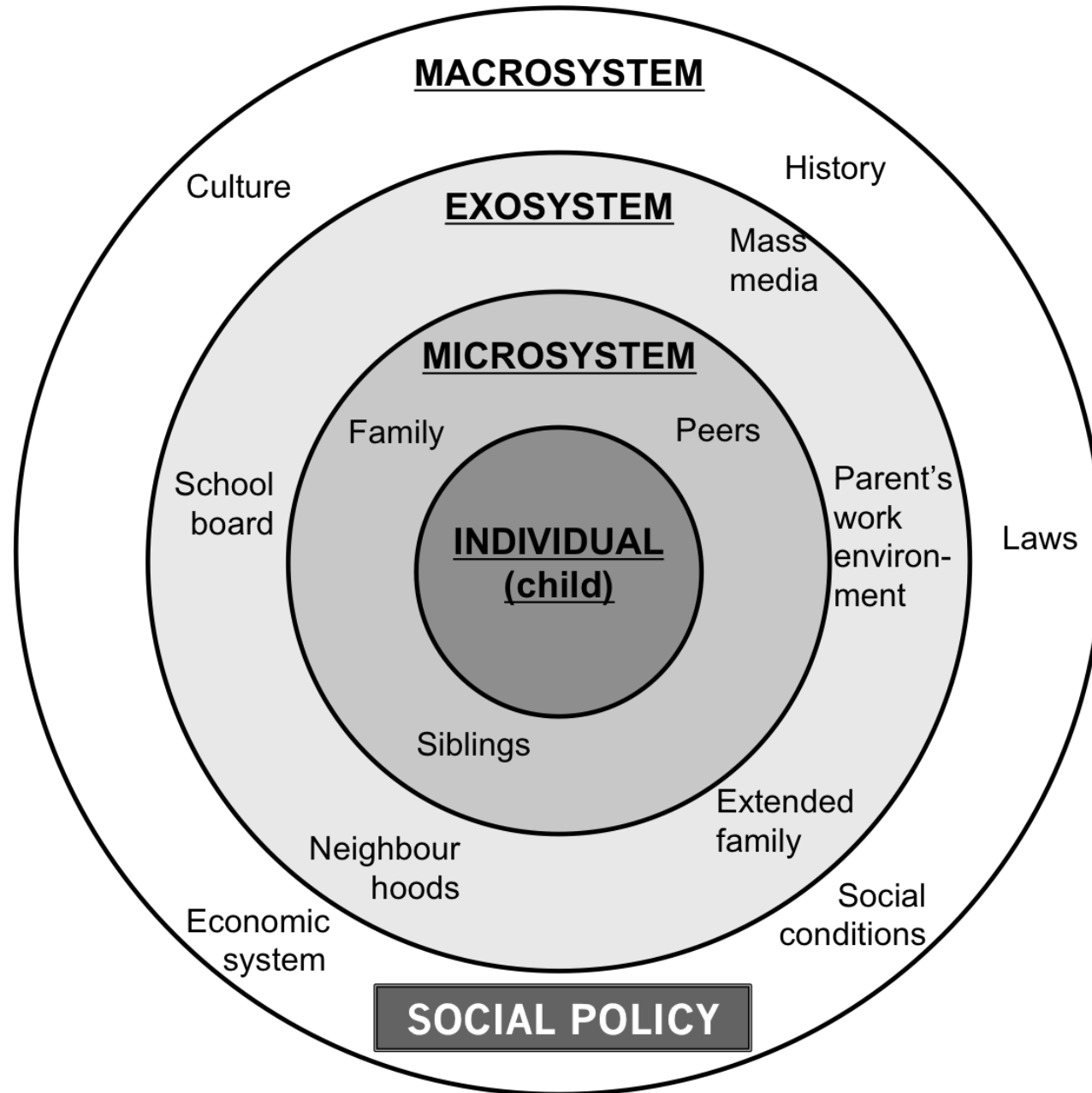


What distinguishes social work from other forms of professional helping?



A 'Person-In-Environment' Perspective





Socio-Cultural Environment



What's missing?



Human wellbeing, indeed human existence, is entirely dependent on a healthy natural environment



We Have a Problem.....



An Ecological Crisis

The ecological crisis
is a moral issue.

Pope John Paul II

quote fancy

Social Justice and Human Rights

- Our profession is concerned with the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities
- We advocate for all persons to be treated with respect and dignity, free from discrimination and oppression
- The negative impacts of the ecological crisis threaten human wellbeing
- These impacts are not evenly or equitably distributed
- They will fall most heavily on those individuals, groups, communities and societies who are already vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised

An Ethical Obligation

‘Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments’ (IFSW, 2000, in AASW, 2010: 7, Section 1.1).

‘Social work operates at the interface between people and their social, cultural and physical environments’ (AASW, 2010: 9. Section 1.3).

An Ethical Obligation

‘The social work profession also recognises that social work takes place in a context whereby social systems have a mutually interdependent relationship with the natural environment’ (AASW, 2010: 9. Section 1.3).

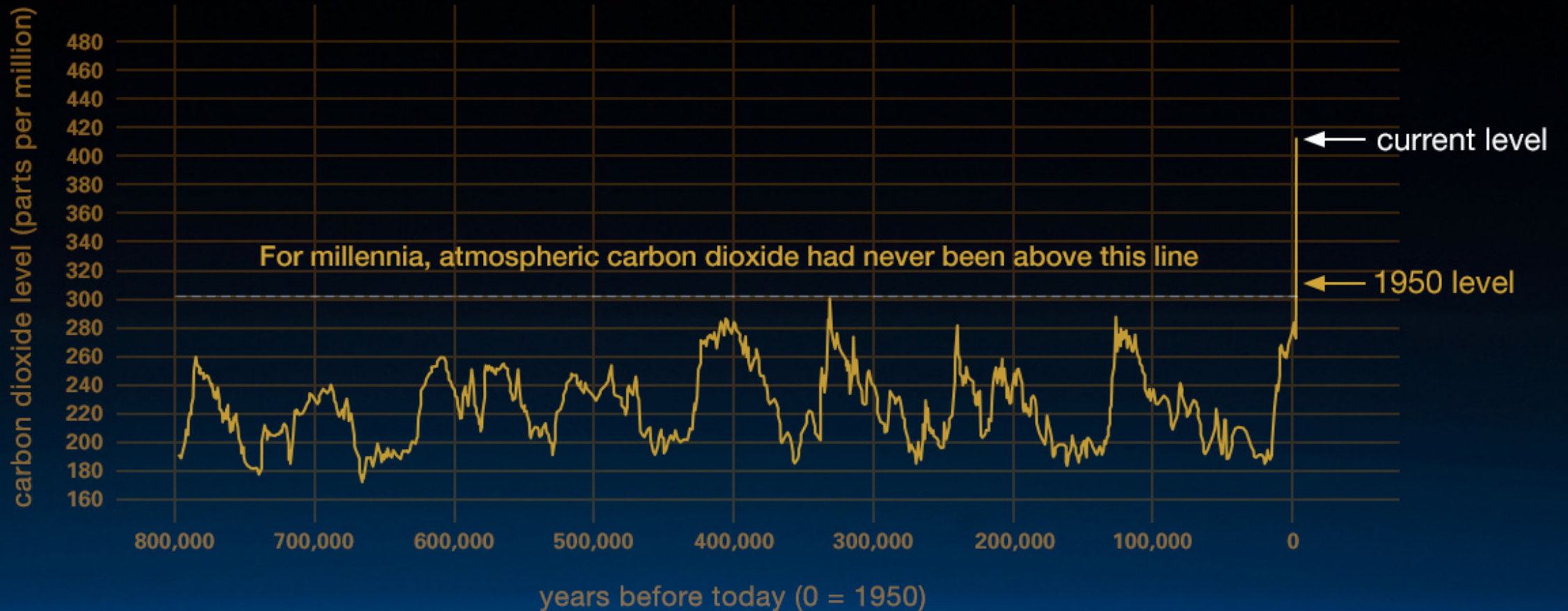
‘The social work profession promotes the protection of the natural environment as inherent to social wellbeing’ (AASW, 2010: 13, Section 3.2).

An Ethical Obligation

‘Social workers will advocate for and promote the protection of the natural environment in recognition of its fundamental importance to the future of human society’ (AASW, 2010: 20, Section 5.1.3, clause M).

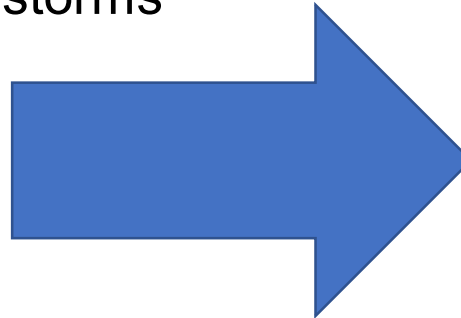
‘Social workers will meet their responsibilities to society by engaging in action to promote societal and environmental wellbeing’ (AASW, 2010: 20, Section 5.1.3, Clause J).

Climate Change



Impacts of Climate Change

- More frequent and extreme heat
- Rising seas and increased coastal flooding
- Longer and more severe bushfires
- More frequent and more severe cyclones and storms
- Significant and widespread health impacts
- Destruction of marine ecosystems
- More severe droughts in some areas
- Forest death
- Impacts on groundwater supplies
- Disruption to food supplies
- Species extinctions (biodiversity loss)



**Exacerbate
Existing
Inequities and
Disadvantage**

Impacts of Climate Change

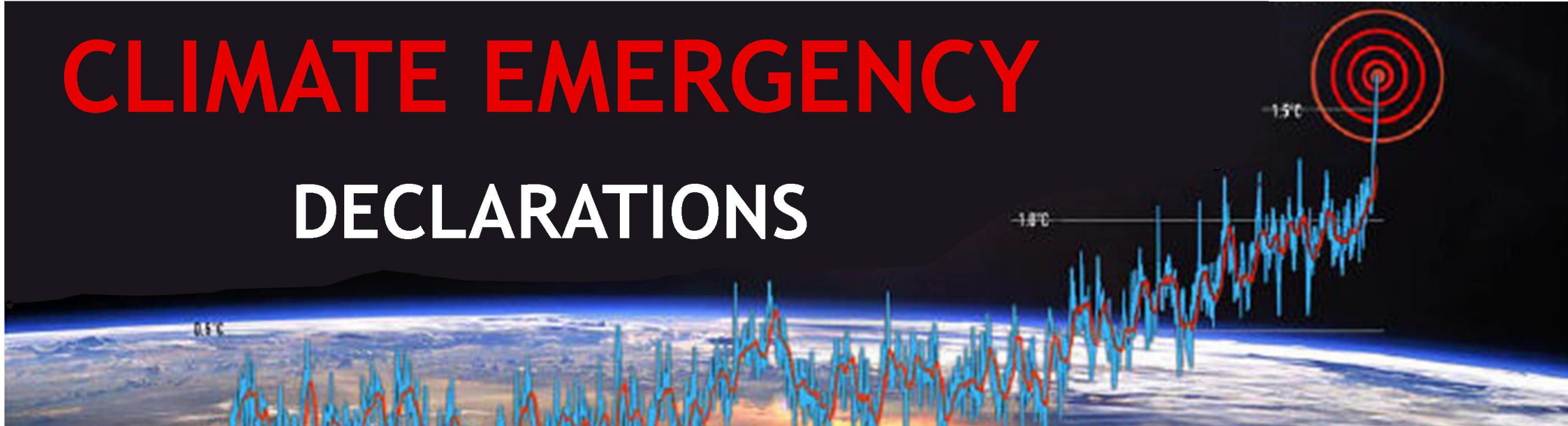


Social Work Fields of Practice

Child welfare
Criminal Justice/Corrections
Family Services
Health
Mental Health
Women's Services
Family and Domestic Violence
Disability
Housing and Homelessness
Discrimination
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Issues
Grief and Loss
Alcohol and Other Drugs
Employment
Income Support

A Climate Emergency?

CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS



0

2010

2017

2030

2050

1.5°C is equal to 2.7°F
Source: IPCC Global Warming of 1.5°C Report

CLIMATE  CENTRAL

Climate Change and Social Work

- Reaction
- Adaptation
- Mitigation



As new professionals...what now?

- Become better informed about the relationship between humans and the natural environment
- Become better informed about the scale and impacts of the ecological crisis and climate change
- Take individual action to reduce your ecological footprint
- Work with groups and organisations to reduce their ecological footprint and embed sustainability as 'core business'
- Look for ways to harness the positives of the environment in your practice....and raise awareness of environmental issues

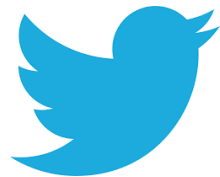
As new professionals...what now?

- Work towards meaningful action on climate change at the State, National and International levels
- Lobbying governments, petitions, submissions, letters, VOTE
- Get Active: Get Involved; with community groups, with social activists, with change oriented organisations



SOCIAL WORKERS
For **CLIMATE ACTION**

- Inform
- Support
- Resource
- Activate



#sw4ca

Thank You

